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## Globalization and the Unending Frontier: An Overview

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## **Globalization and the Unending Frontier: An Overview**

Olutayo C. Adesina<sup>1</sup>

The decisive events and the determining forces unleashed by globalization hold on the one hand, the potential for expanding the scope of political, social and economic processes, and on the other, erode people's connection to the way they live, the people they live with and the places they live in. They also intensify alienation and disengagement. The essays, themes, arguments and macro-level analysis in this volume try to make sense of the dynamics of globalization. They survey the potentials of the phenomenon and forces of globalization, and the capacity of these highly disruptive and contentious change processes to direct, affect and influence major developments in different parts of our globalizing world. They have particularly placed emphases on the strength and the contradictions embedded in the process of expansion, change and accumulation engendered by globalization.

The acknowledgement of the strategic realities represented by globalization has unleashed countless debates on the effects of globalization on the contemporary world. There seems to be a general feeling that globalization entangles the present with the past in webs designed to equip nations and peoples for their existence in the contemporary world. The growing interdependence of peoples and countries has no doubt become the main developments of the twenty-first century. As a corollary to this, there is the prevalent assumption that the market is the only way to make the world expand the frontiers of the human society. The burden of understanding what this means has brought groups and individuals around the world out in support of the redemptive virtues of globalization (Cf. Friedman, T.L., 2005), or in stark disagreement with it (Rugumamu, 1999, p. 11). Those who looked beyond the hegemonic and triumphalism aspects of globalization would reflect perceptibly on the

implications of the emergence of a new world of change and development in different parts of the globe. The rise of China and India as major players in the global economy has been touted as one of the major positive effects of globalization. But can the same be said of other parts of the developing world? These and other posers on the effects of globalization emanated from papers selected for the special edition of this journal.

The papers published here were initially presented at the University of Ibadan/Kennesaw State University Joint International Conference on *Globalization: Migration, Citizenship and Identity*, which held at Ibadan, Nigeria from November 6-9, 2007. This body of essays converged to throw light on the impact of globalization on different parts of the globe.

Bolanle Awe in her paper entitled "Globalization: Acculturation or Cultural Erosion? A Historical Reflection" situates globalization within the context of Africa's role in the world. The paper was first presented as a keynote address at the above-named conference. It examines the human dimension, the interaction of human beings globally, the migration of people from their original homes, and settlement in new abodes. It reflects on the issue of the cultural impact, the effect of the interactions between Africa and the world on African ways of life. She posed the overriding questions: would these interactions promote acculturation or are Africans at the risk of being victims of cultural erosion? Culture is not static, and cultural diffusion has been recognized as a legitimate process of cultural change. Nevertheless, will Africans lose their roots, only to be sustained by the cultural norms and practices that are external to them? With a shock of recognition, she affirmed that external influences are becoming more present and exerting greater influences on African lives and the emerging reality is a world in which African nations are diminishing in influence.

A critical reading of Daiyabu's paper entitled "Islam, Globalization and Freedom of Expression," point to an amplification of the strained relations between Islam and the West, shaped by interactions between forces of religion, globalization, and liberalism. In this article, the objective is to examine the impact and consequences of the post 9/11 interface between Islam, secular assault on religion, and the exercise of freedom of expression, particularly in Western societies. It builds on the argument of the divided world in which the West and the Islamic world have evolved a terrifying antagonism to each other (Huntington, 1993, p. 31; Mamdani, 2004, p. 20-21).

Melanie Bush, in " 'American Dream' or Global Nightmare?" explores related transitions in notions of "nation" and who "belongs." The ideological and institutional framework of white supremacy would ultimately set the parameters for the development of the United States and the modern world

system. This inevitably led to the expansion of U.S. global hegemony and empire resulting in tentative positioning of all non-Europeans both domestically and internationally. Who is an American? Why does the United States of America appropriate the name "American"? How, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were specific groups of people, except "Whites," excluded from the "American Dream," from the lofty principles of the American nation, such as liberty, equality, individualism? These questions have significant implications for identity and intergroup relations in the United States; they also echo around the world in the way that the United States relates to other nations and peoples.

Bahadır H. Tur's paper, entitled "Globalization as the Ultimate Evil': Reading Turkey's Extreme Right and Extreme Left Political Parties' Approaches to Globalization," is one of the empirical case studies presented in the volume. In it he revealed the paradox posed by globalization. Turkey's extreme right and extreme left wing parties, who are literally enemies of each other, have been meeting at the same anti-globalist point by using the same rhetoric which simply reads: "Globalization is the name of an economic war against developing countries." Thus, confronting underdevelopment represented by globalization has become an abiding faith with both parties.

Ameh Dennis Akoh, in "What is Globalisation to Postcolonialism? An Apologia for African Literature," referred to globalization, unequivocally as a lofty idea/project conceived with diseased feet. For him, Africa has always been dragged along by the West. Africa's contributions to many intellectual discourses have often been from the "underside" of history. He wonders why postcolonial theory in literature doesn't coincide with postcolonial reality in the lives of former colonies. He is sure that there is nothing "post-" in Africans' daily lives, rather the unrealized dreams of political independence and a most subtle form of re-enslavement.

The global expansion of capital and its significance for Yorubaland is the focus of Mutiat Titilope Kareem-Ojo's, "International Migration and Women Traders at Gbagi Textile Market, Ibadan." This paper examines the historical background of *Gbagi* textile market in Ibadan and the response to international trade among women merchants at the market to what they saw as the challenge of foreign merchants—the Lebanese. It discusses the relationship between Lebanese traders in Nigeria and Yoruba women merchants at the market.

Universities are at the forefront of recognizing the need for change. Daniel Paracka's, "Global Learning: Engaging Questions of Globalization," calls attention to what institutions of higher learning can do to promote and facilitate social change. The paper examines several common reactions to the challenges of globalization around the world, and outlines primary areas of focus for global

educators—teachers, international education administrators, consortia, etc.—to achieve the objectives of educating for global citizenship. The example of one institution's ambitious plans for promoting global learning is discussed.

The essays in this volume will no doubt set up conversations in different parts of the world on how to design a better way for making globalization work for the good of all.

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## Endnotes

I am deeply honored to have been asked by the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Global Initiatives* to be Guest Editor for this special issue of the journal.